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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, May 11, 1933.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Washing Rugs at Home." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

The question before the house this morning is how to clean a large living room rug. The lady who asks the question writes that she has always given her rug regular cleaning every few days with her vacuum cleaner or her carpet sweeper. But now the rug has become too soiled to be improved by these routine methods. It looks grimy and has some spots here and there. What to do about it?

Answer: You can send it to a reliable dry cleaner. Or, for economy's sake, you can clean or wash it at home yourself. But let me say right here that washing a large rug is a job that requires care and correct methods for satisfactory results. Washing sometimes causes a rug to shrink or change color. And then, unless you can dry a heavy rug thoroughly and quickly, dampness left in may rot the threads. This is especially true of thick-piled rugs. Unless you dry them carefully, moisture will remain at the bottom of the pile and do damage. For safety's sake, better experiment first by washing and drying just one little corner of the rug. If this is successful, you can feel safe about going ahead and shampooing the entire rug.

Of course, rag rugs and light-weight cotton rugs are easy to wash in a tub of soapsuds and to rinse by applying the garden hose. These small, light rugs are easy to handle. But that big living room rug isn't suited to a tubbing. That must take its bath "piecemeal," lying flat on the floor. Instead of laundering it all at one time, you'll apply lather to a small area, then rinse and dry off that small area with a cloth before you advance to the next area. And so on until you have covered the entire rug.

But wait. I'm getting ahead of my story. Let's go back to the beginning and discuss this job step by step. Every step counts in success.

The first step is cleaning your rug thoroughly on both sides with a beater or a vacuum cleaner, to remove any loose or surface dirt. The next step is removing spots and stains. Those grease spots the lady mentioned, for example -- they must come out before the rug gets its bath, if it is to look clean afterward. Treat any grease spots with a cloth dipped in a grease solvent. Carbon tetrachloride is a safe and reliable grease solvent for home use. Then take out any other stains, like ink or paint, that require special treatment and won't come out with water.

Now you're ready for the main job. Make soap for rug shampooing by dissolving two tablespoons of good neutral soap flakes in ten tablespoons of hot soft water. Allow the mixture to cool, and beat it into a stiff lather with an egg beater. Keep the soap at the consistency of shaving lather all through the job. Spread the lather on a small section of the surface of the rug with a soft brush or a sponge and scrub in a circular motion. Always keep the soap lather on the rug and use as little as possible. Now press off the suds with a bone paper knife or a dull case knife and rub over the surface with a soft moistened cloth. Now rinse several times with a cloth wrung out of luke-warm water. Be sure to change this water as soon as it gets dirty. Finally, use a dry cloth to take up all possible moisture. And proceed to the next section of the rug. Overlap the sections as you wash, so no soiled streak will appear when the rug is dry.

When you have washed the whole rug in this way, go back over it all with a damp brush. This will rub up the nap all in one direction. Work rapidly. Don't use anymore water than necessary. And above all, never let the back of the rug get wet.

What about drying? The cleaned rug may dry right on the floor. Or, if it isn't heavy, hang it outdoors on the line away from the sun.

But here's a word of caution. The specialists say that if you hang a rug over a line, especially if it is wet and heavy, the threads may break or the bindings pull loose. Pile rugs and carpets are safest dried flat on the floor.

For the sake of rapid drying, choose a warm, dry day for washing your rug. If you can manage to have a draft of air passing over the rug, that will dry it faster.

Now then, let's go back and review the important points in this job of washing a big rug.

1. Try out a small section of the rug first to see that the colors don't run.
2. Choose a warm dry, and if possible, windy day, so the rug will dry rapidly.
3. Remove any loose dirt and spots and stains before washing.
4. Wash the rug in small sections. Apply the lather, scrape it off, rinse and rub dry one place before you move on to another. Work rapidly. Rinse several times. Use as little water as possible. And never let the back of the rug get wet.
5. Here's the equipment needed for washing rugs. Plenty of clean soft pieces of cloth. (Cheesecloth squares are handy.) A soft brush or a sponge. A bowl for the soap lather. Another for the clean water for rinsing. A bone paper knife or a dull case knife for pressing off the lather.

Keeping rugs clean not only makes them look nice, but actually lengthens their life. Sand and other dirt may cut or damage fibers, especially when it is ground in by feet walking over the rug. Spots and stains may harm the fabric also. So, regular cleaning by a vacuum cleaner or by brushing and occasional dry cleaning or washing actually pays in longer wear.

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Tomorrow: "Using Strawberries."

